

VERTIGO



WILLINGHAM • SHANOWER • PEPOY

FABLES

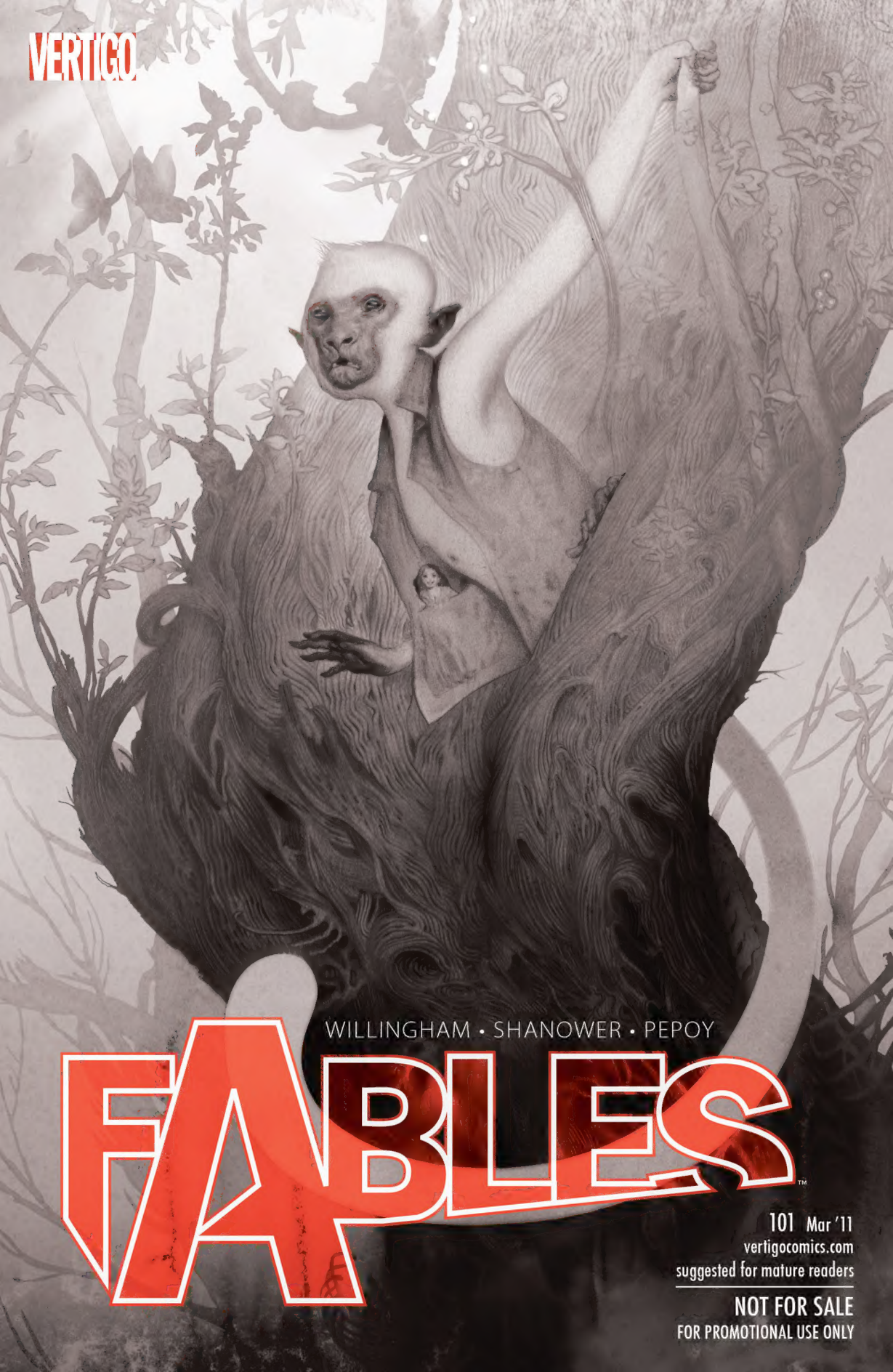
101

Mar '11

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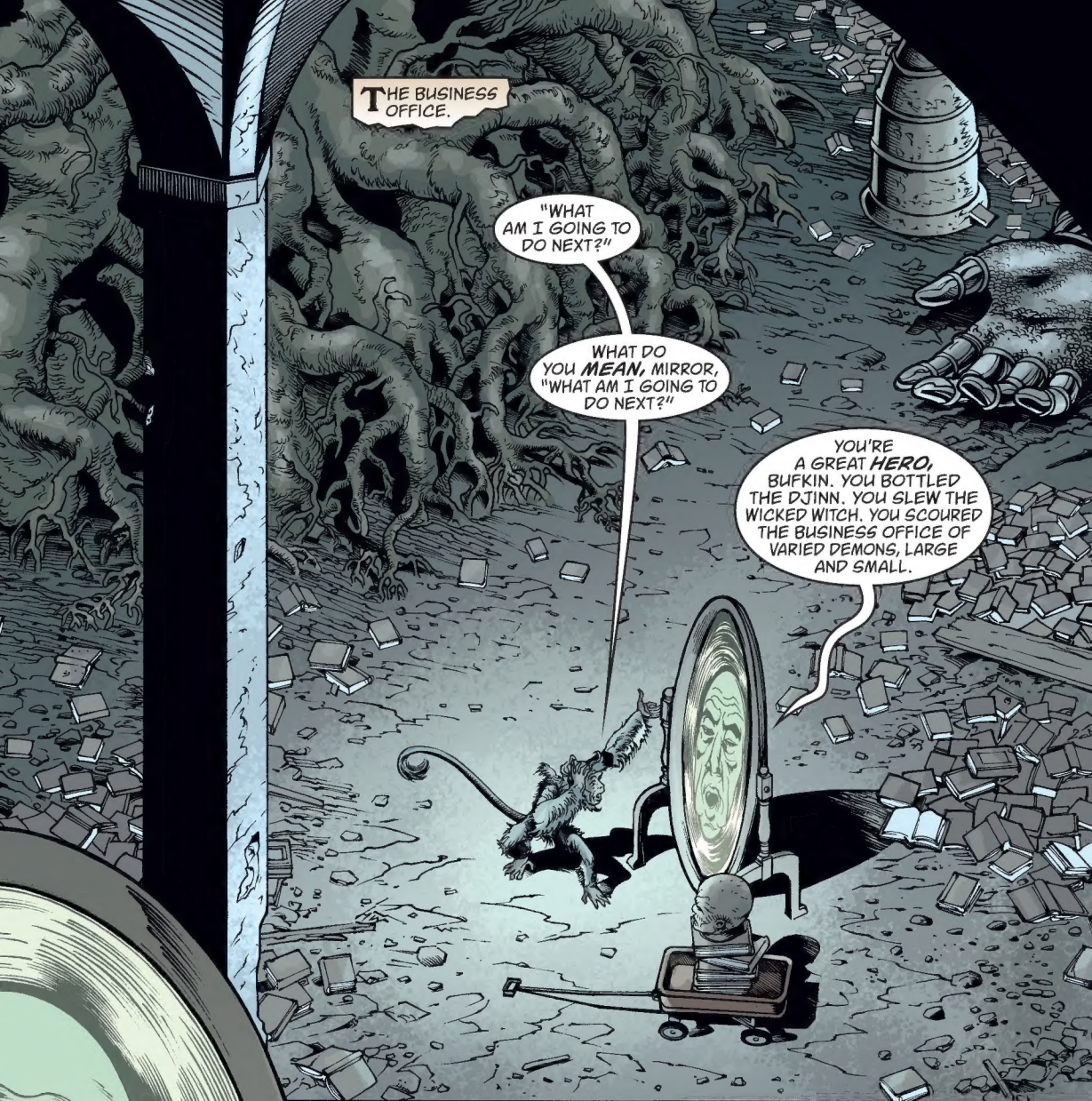
FABLES™

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THE BUSINESS OFFICE.

"WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NEXT?"

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, MIRROR, "WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NEXT?"

YOU'RE A GREAT HERO, BUFKIN. YOU BOTTLED THE DJINN. YOU SLEW THE WICKED WITCH. YOU SCoured THE BUSINESS OFFICE OF VARIED DEMONS, LARGE AND SMALL.



WITH CONSIDERABLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS--ONE OF WHOM IS A RENOWNED GENIUS.



The Ascent

In which we take a moment to see what's been happening in the Business Office lately.

Bill Willingham
writer/creator

Eric Shanower
pencils

Richard Friend
inks 1,2,4

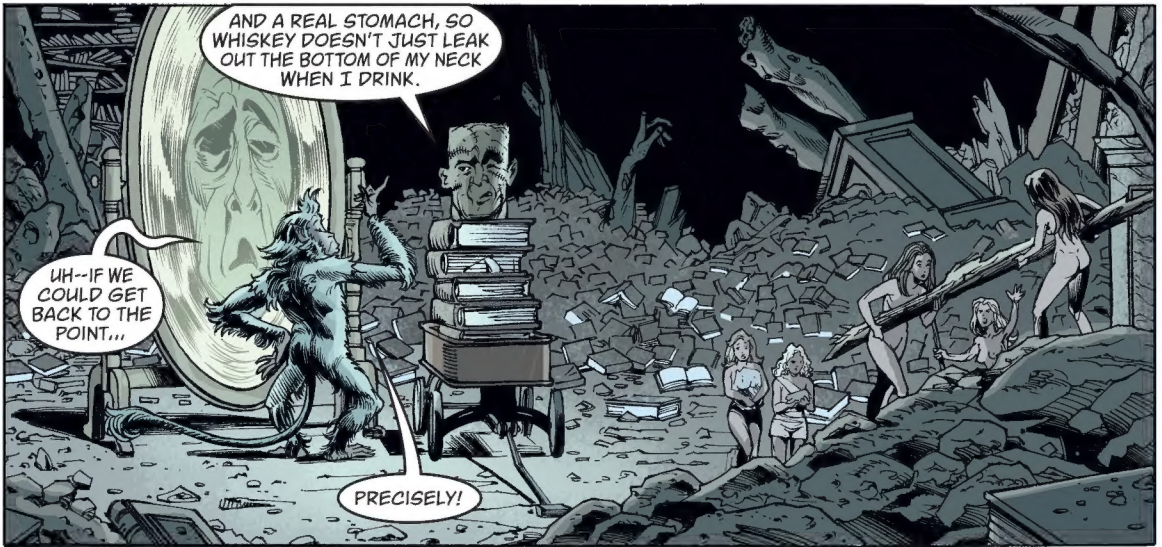
Andrew Pepoy
inks 3,5-20

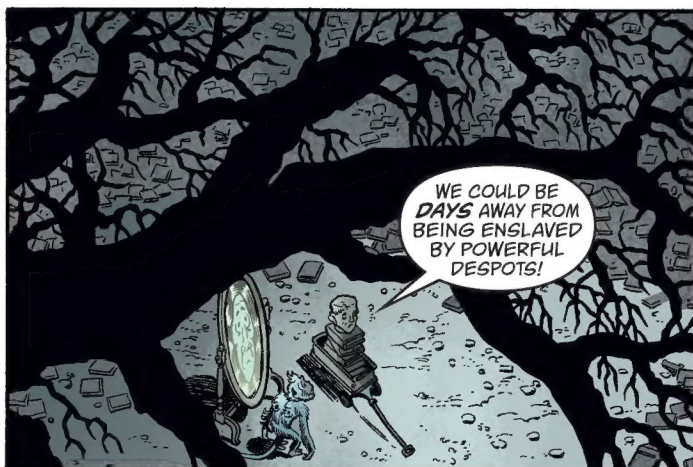
Lee Loughridge
colors

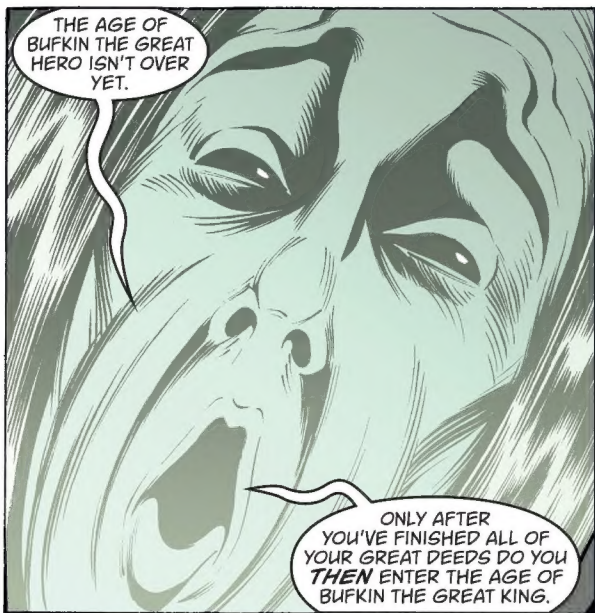
Todd Joao Klein Ruas
letters cover

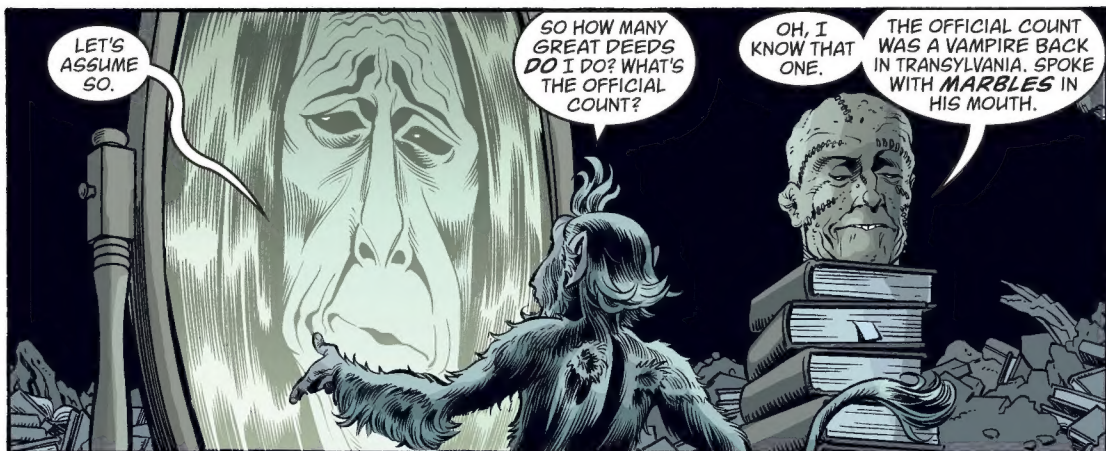
Gregory Lockard
asst. editor

Shelly Bond
editor









LET'S ASSUME SO.

SO HOW MANY GREAT DEEDS DO I DO? WHAT'S THE OFFICIAL COUNT?

OH, I KNOW THAT ONE.

THE OFFICIAL COUNT WAS A VAMPIRE BACK IN TRANSYLVANIA. SPOKE WITH *MARBLES* IN HIS MOUTH.



I FOUGHT HIM ONCE, YEARS BEFORE I FOUGHT THE WOLF MAN. I HAD *MANY* EXCITING ADVENTURES AND SEQUELS OF MY OWN, BACK IN THE DAY.

NO, FRANKIE. HOW MANY GREAT *DEEDS* DO I HAVE TO DO? HERACLES HAD TWELVE. WHAT'S *MY* NUMBER?



THIRTEEN. ONE MORE THAN HIM, BECAUSE YOU'RE EVEN MIGHTIER.

WELL, THAT MAKES SENSE. CAN'T ARGUE WITH THE OBVIOUS.



AND I ALREADY DID *THREE* OF THEM, RIGHT? I BOTTLED THE DJINN, KILLED BABA YAGA, AND SCOURED THE OTHER CREEPOS OUT OF THE BUSINESS OFFICE. *THREE DARING DEEDS!*

SURE.
YEAH.
ONLY TEN MORE TO GO.



SO WHAT'S NEXT?

MY POINT EXACTLY.



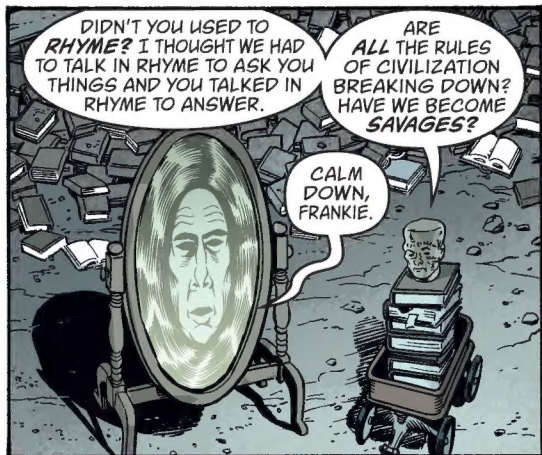
LATER...

CAN I GO?

ME TOO!
I WANT A NEW
ADVENTURE
TOO!

NO.
THIS IS MIGHTY
HEROES' WORK. TOO
DANGEROUS FOR
WOMENFOLK.

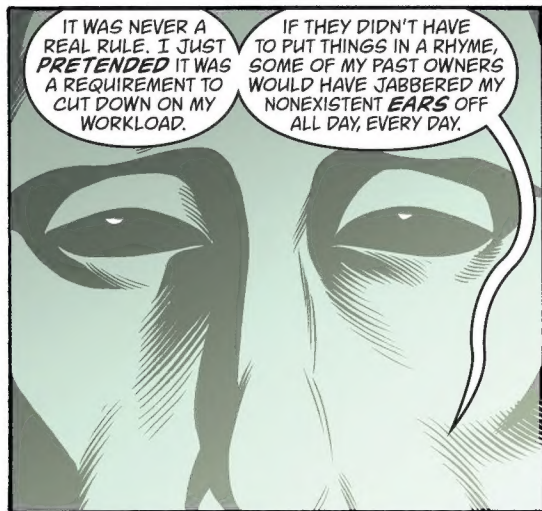
IF YOU
LET ME GO
I'LL BE YOUR
GIRLFRIEND.



DIDN'T YOU USED TO
RHYME? I THOUGHT WE HAD
TO TALK IN RHYME TO ASK YOU
THINGS AND YOU TALKED IN
RHYME TO ANSWER.

ARE
ALL THE RULES
OF CIVILIZATION
BREAKING DOWN?
HAVE WE BECOME
SAVAGES?

CALM
DOWN,
FRANKIE.



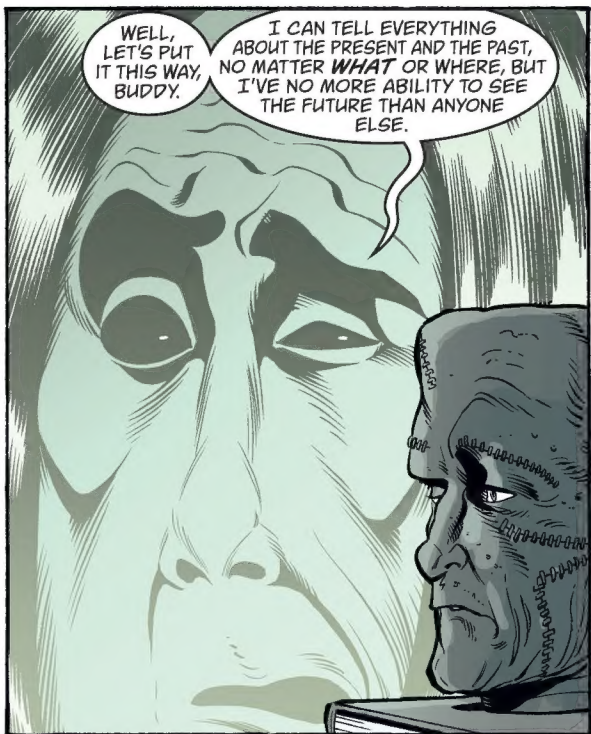
IT WAS NEVER A
REAL RULE. I JUST
PRETENDED IT WAS
A REQUIREMENT TO
CUT DOWN ON MY
WORKLOAD.

IF THEY DIDN'T HAVE
TO PUT THINGS IN A RHYME,
SOME OF MY PAST OWNERS
WOULD HAVE JABBED MY
NONEXISTENT **EARS** OFF
ALL DAY, EVERY DAY.



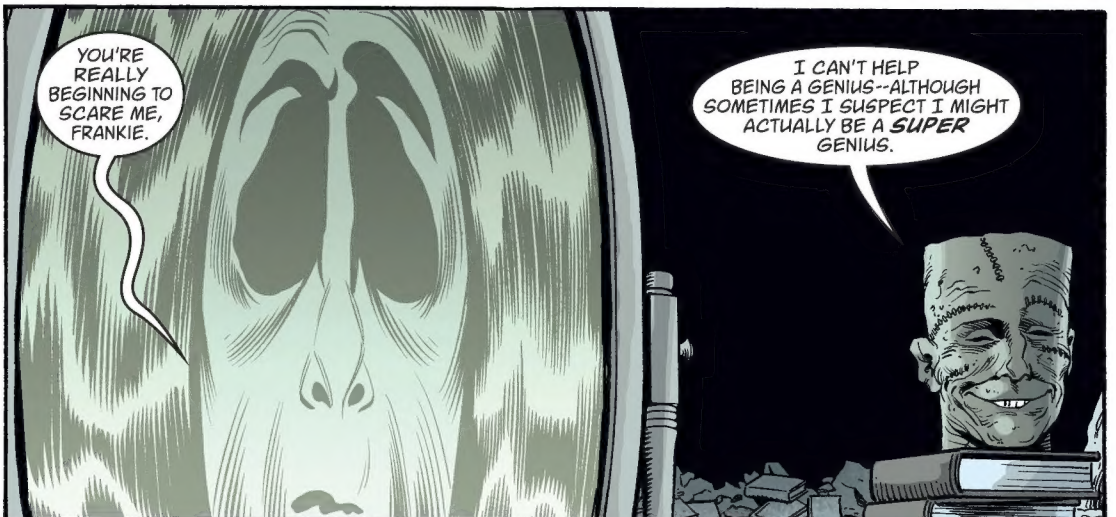
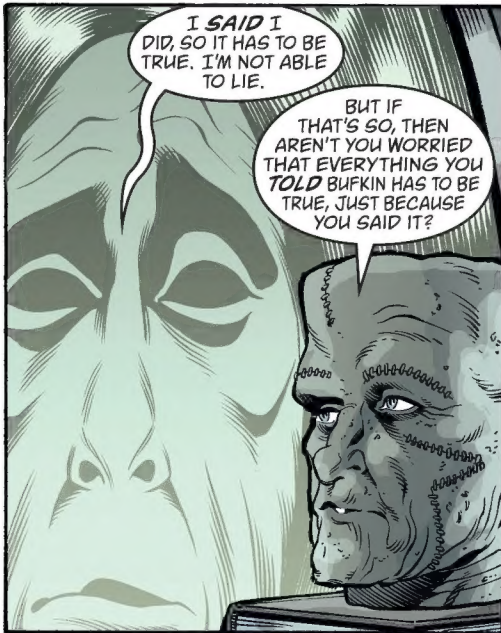
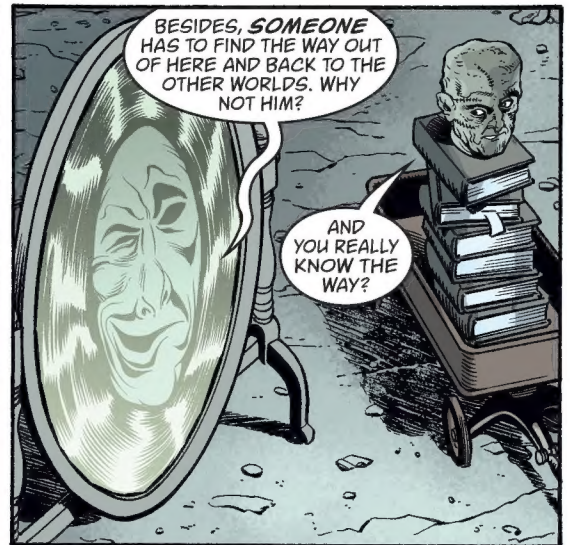
HONESTLY--
THEY WANTED EVERY
LITTLE THING **REVEALED**
TO THEM ALL THE
DAMNNED TIME.

I SEE.
SPEAKING OF
MAKING THINGS UP AS
YOU GO ALONG, YOU MADE
UP ALL THAT STUFF YOU
JUST TOLD BUFFIN,
RIGHT?



WELL,
LET'S PUT
IT THIS WAY,
BUDDY.

I CAN TELL EVERYTHING
ABOUT THE PRESENT AND THE PAST,
NO MATTER **WHAT** OR **WHERE**, BUT
I'VE NO MORE ABILITY TO SEE
THE FUTURE THAN ANYONE
ELSE.

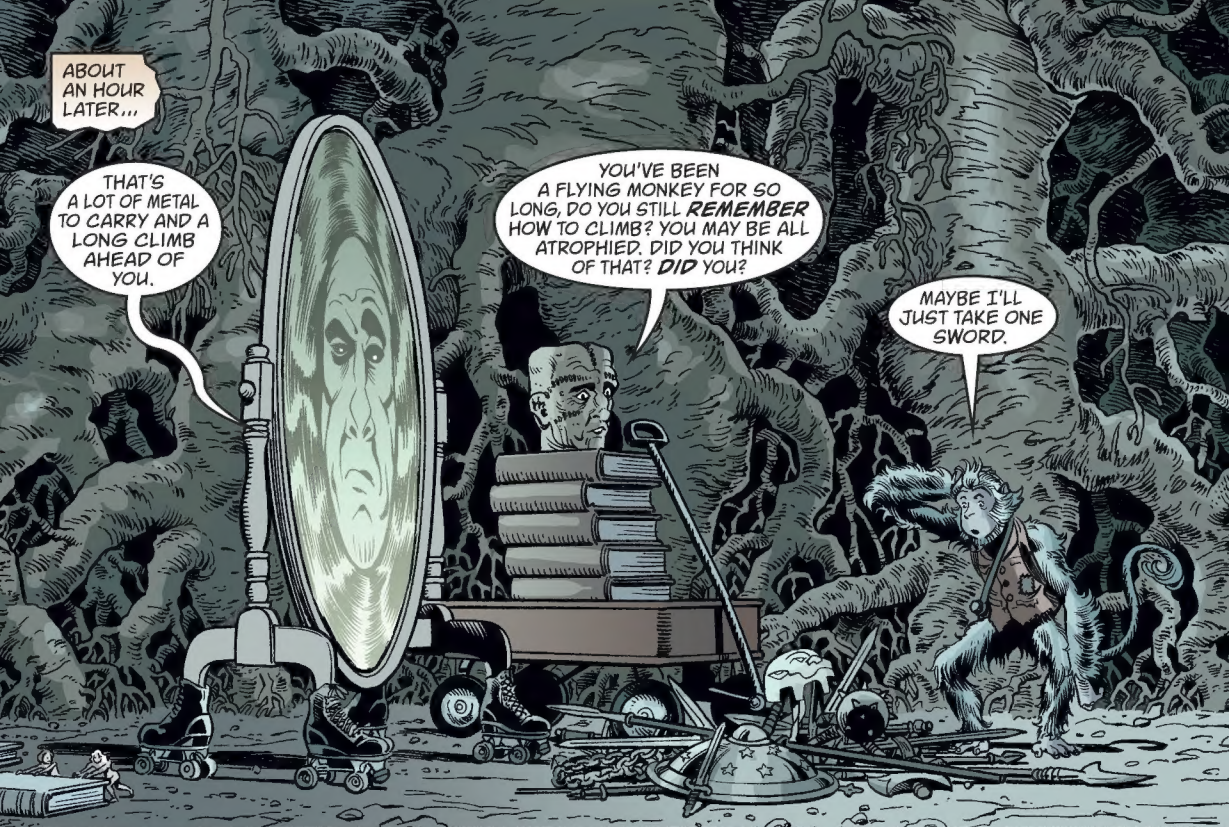


ABOUT AN HOUR LATER...

THAT'S A LOT OF METAL TO CARRY AND A LONG CLIMB AHEAD OF YOU.

YOU'VE BEEN A FLYING MONKEY FOR SO LONG, DO YOU STILL **REMEMBER** HOW TO CLIMB? YOU MAY BE ALL ATROPHIED. DID YOU THINK OF THAT? **DID YOU?**

MAYBE I'LL JUST TAKE ONE SWORD.



REMEMBER: NO MATTER HOW YOU MUTTER OR POUT, **UP** IS THE ONLY WAY TO OUT.

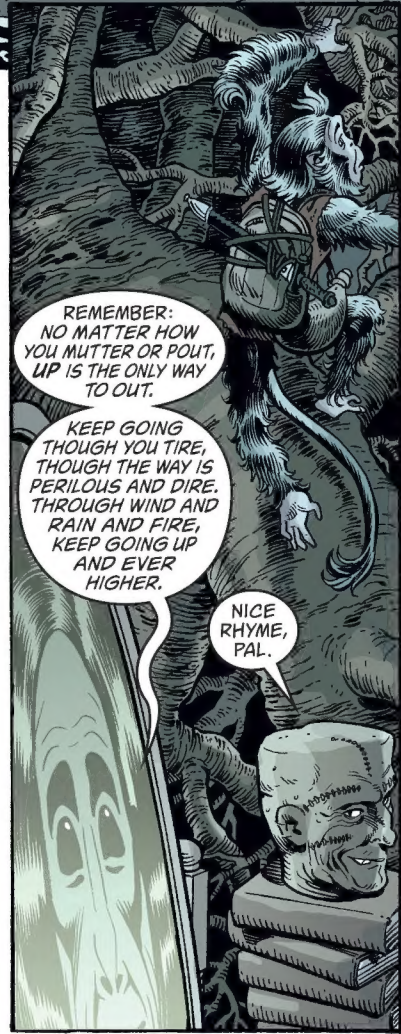
KEEP GOING THOUGH YOU TIRE, THOUGH THE WAY IS PERILOUS AND DIRE. THROUGH WIND AND RAIN AND FIRE, KEEP GOING UP AND EVER HIGHER.

NICE RHYME, PAL.

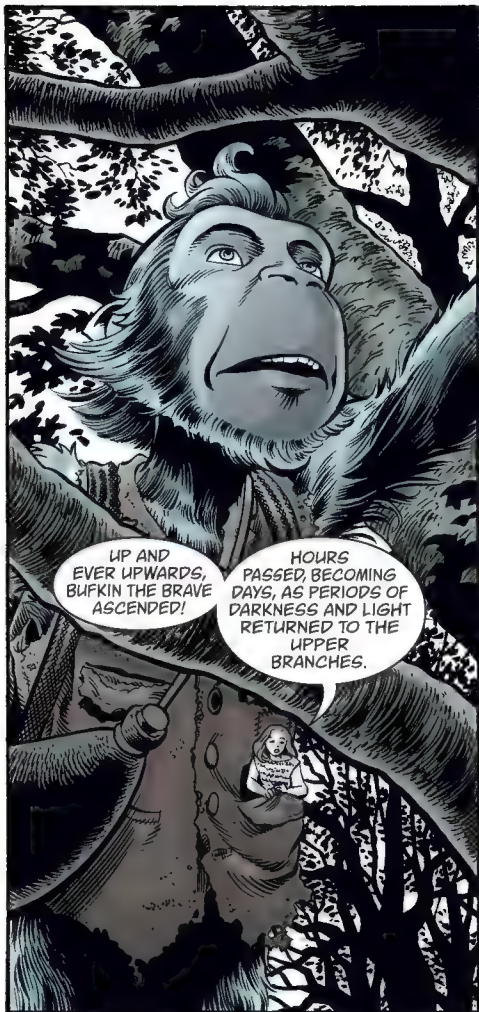
SEEMED APT FOR THE OCCASION TO SEND HIM OFF IN A TRADITIONAL WAY.

SO WHAT WILL HE FIND AT THE TOP?

THERE *IS* NO TOP. NOT TO THIS TREE.



"AND SO HE CLIMBED, UP AND AWAY FROM SHELVES, FESTOONED WITH BOOKS, TO WHERE THE ANCIENT TREE HAD LEAVES AGAIN."



UP AND
EVER UPWARDS,
BUFKIN THE BRAVE
ASCENDED!

HOURS
PASSED, BECOMING
DAYS, AS PERIODS OF
DARKNESS AND LIGHT
RETURNED TO THE
UPPER
BRANCHES.



HEY!

GRADUALLY
IT BECAME CLEAR
THAT BUFKIN HAD CLIMBED
ENTIRELY OUT OF THE
REALM OF THE BUSINESS
OFFICE, WHERE THE
PASSING OF NIGHT AND
DAY WAS NEVER
MARKED.



LILY
MARTAGON!

YOU LITTLE
STINKER! YOU
STOWAWAY!

WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE?!

I CAME
ALONG TO NARRATE
YOUR ADVENTURES,
OF COURSE.



YOU
HAVE TO GO
BACK!

NO WAY!
YOU *NEED*
ME!

WHAT WOULD
KING KONG'S ASCENT
OF THE EMPIRE STATE
BUILDING *BE* WITHOUT
FAY WRAY? BLAND AT
BEST! WORTHLESS,
MORE LIKELY!



MORE
IMPORTANT, WHO'D
NARRATE YOUR DEEDS
IF I *DIDN'T* COME
ALONG?

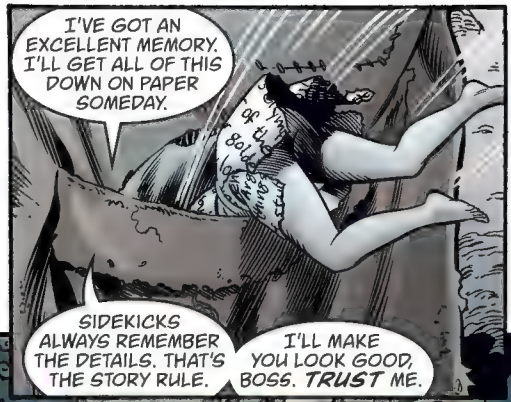
YOU WANT TO
DO YOUR THINGS IN
OBSCURITY? UNCHARTED?
UNCHRONICLED? YOU'D THINK
AN AVID READER LIKE YOU
WOULD *KNOW* BETTER
THAN THAT.

...of
...; an the
... in the mo
... venerable the
...
... vine
... home the Arg
... vexed for thing
... iful pride of stubb



ACCORDING TO HISTORIANS, IF IT AIN'T WRITTEN, IT NEVER HAPPENED.

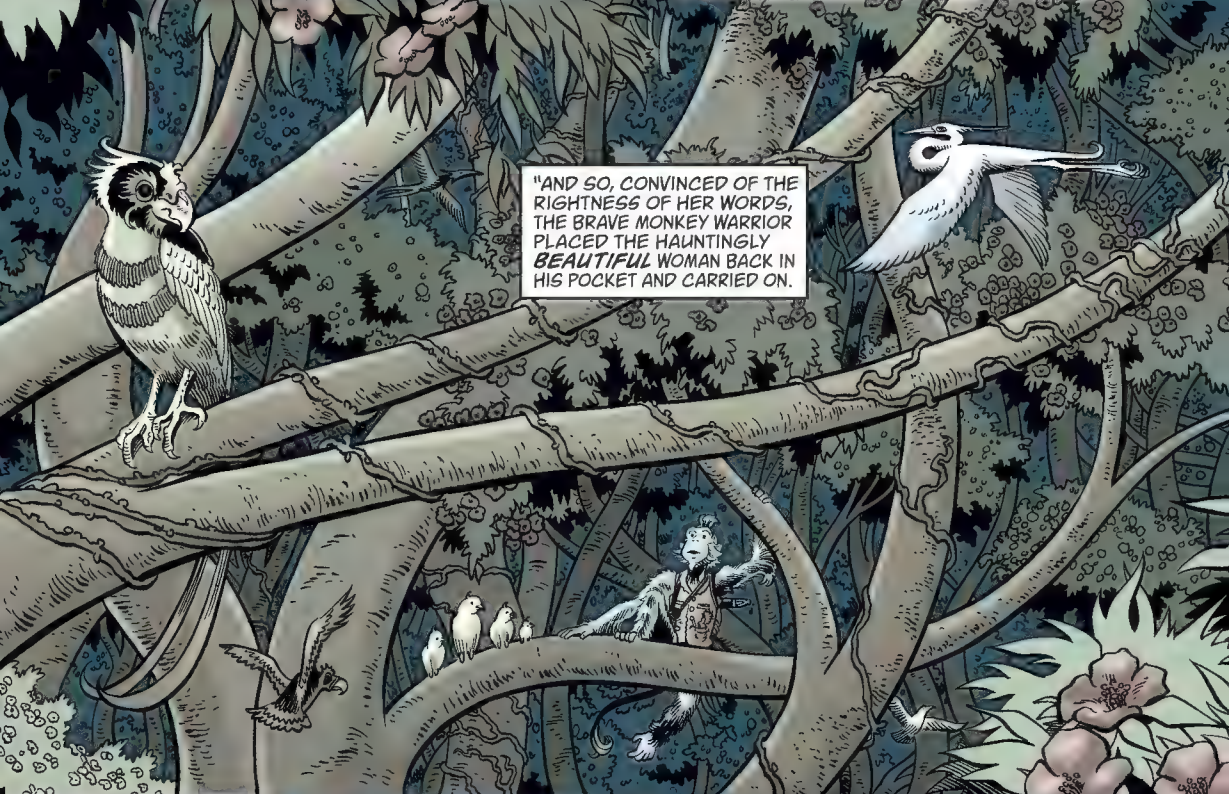
BUT YOU AREN'T WRITING. YOU'RE JUST JABBERING.



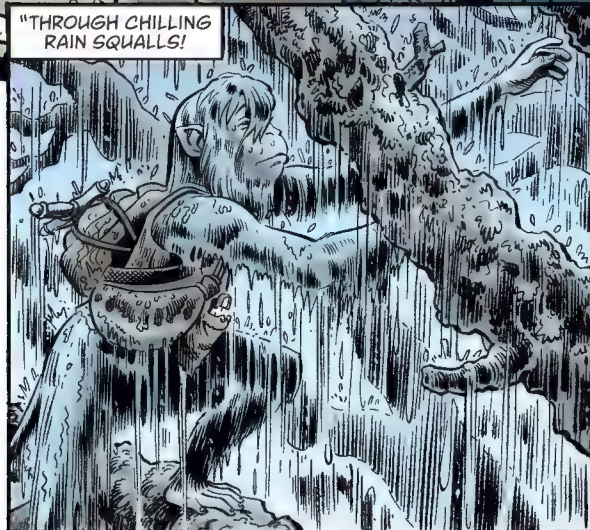
I'VE GOT AN EXCELLENT MEMORY. I'LL GET ALL OF THIS DOWN ON PAPER SOMEDAY.

SIDEKICKS ALWAYS REMEMBER THE DETAILS. THAT'S THE STORY RULE.

I'LL MAKE YOU LOOK GOOD, BOSS. TRUST ME.



"AND SO, CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTNESS OF HER WORDS, THE BRAVE MONKEY WARRIOR PLACED THE HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN BACK IN HIS POCKET AND CARRIED ON.



"THROUGH CHILLING RAIN SQUALLS!"



"AND THE GLOOM OF NIGHT."

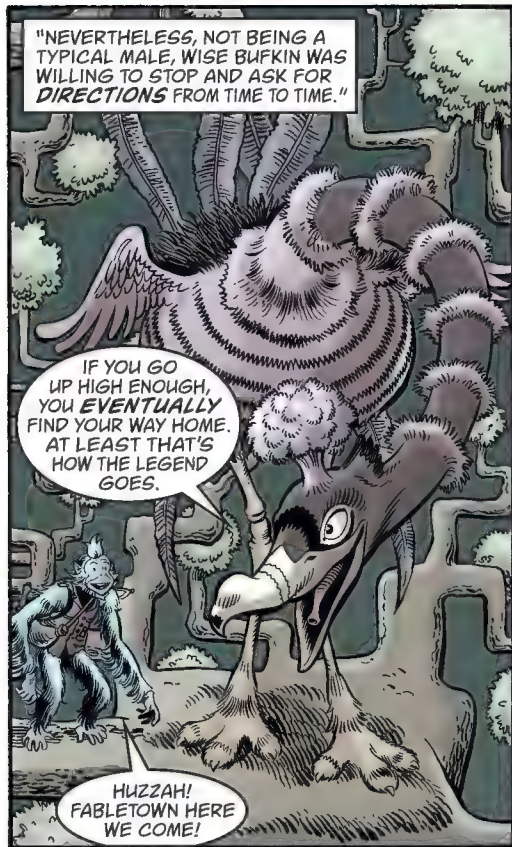


"BESET BY TERRIBLE MONSTERS!"

BACK!

BACK, I SAY--OR FEAST ON MY RAZOR-SHARP STEEL!

REALLY, FELLA, I SIMPLY INQUIRED IF YOU'D SEEN ANY GOOD NUTS ON THE LOWER BRANCHES. NO NEED TO ACT SO SQUIRRELY.



"NEVERTHELESS, NOT BEING A TYPICAL MALE, WISE BUFKIN WAS WILLING TO STOP AND ASK FOR DIRECTIONS FROM TIME TO TIME."

IF YOU GO UP HIGH ENOUGH, YOU EVENTUALLY FIND YOUR WAY HOME. AT LEAST THAT'S HOW THE LEGEND GOES.

HUZZAH! FABLETOWN HERE WE COME!



"HE CLIMBED UNTIL IT SEEMED CLIMBING WAS ALL HE'D EVER DONE, THROUGHOUT THE END-LESS DAYS OF HIS LIFE."



"HE HAD RUN OUT OF FOOD LONG BEFORE AND HAD TO FORAGE FOR WHAT ODD AND EXOTIC FRUITS THE TREE PROVIDED."

AND SOMETIMES FAIRLY TASTY BUGS! REMEMBER TO WRITE THAT DOWN, TOO!



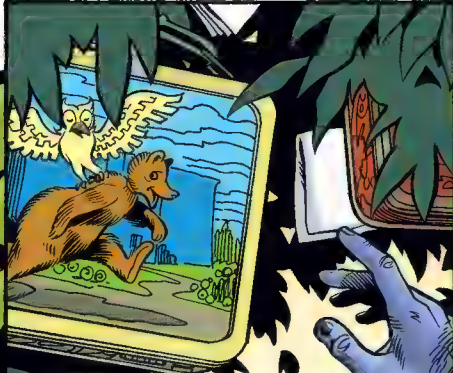
"HE LOST TRACK OF THE NUMBER OF TIMES HE'D STOPPED TO SLEEP."

"BUT ONE MIRACULOUS DAY HE WOKE TO FIND--"

HUH?

I'M IN A TREE.

A NORMAL TREE WITH THE GROUND RIGHT DOWN THERE, WHERE THE GROUND SHOULD BE, AND BRANCHES THAT DON'T KEEP GOING UP AND UP AND UP TO FOREVER AND EVER!



WAIT!

THIS ISN'T A NORMAL TREE AT ALL. IT'S A LUNCH BOX TREE!



PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY!

MY FAVORITE!

MMMMMMMM! HMM! MMMM!

EVEN BETTER! THIS ONE HAS A TUNA FISH AND MAYO AND SWEET PICKLES!

MY OTHER FAVORITE!

HEY! WAIT! THERE AREN'T ANY LUNCH BOX TREES IN FABLETOWN OR ANY OTHER WORLD! THAT'S A PUBLISHED RULE!

THERE WAS ONLY EVER THE SINGLE ONE IN--

HEY! THAT DIRTY GIANT TREE IN THE BUSINESS OFFICE SCREWED UP! IT DIDN'T SEND ME HOME TO FABLETOWN AT ALL! IT SENT ME TO OZ INSTEAD!

WAIT! IT SENT ME TO OZ INSTEAD!

IT DID SEND ME HOME!

"SEE? NOT ALWAYS QUICK, BUT HE DOES EVENTUALLY FIGURE THINGS OUT."

HALT, YOU FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE!

GET THEM, TOM!

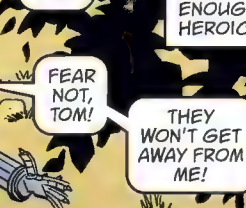
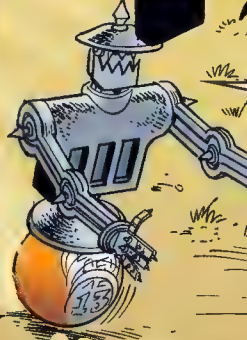
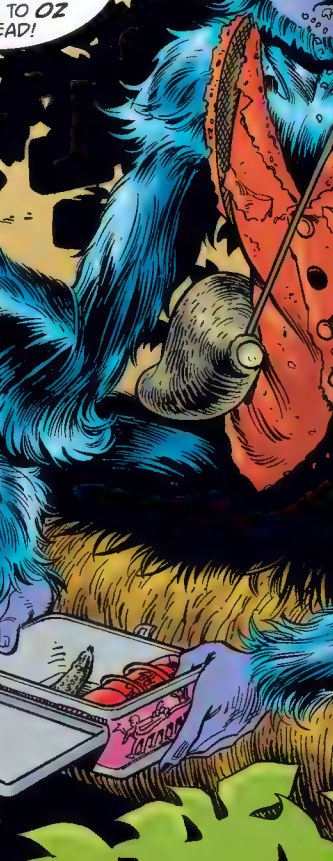
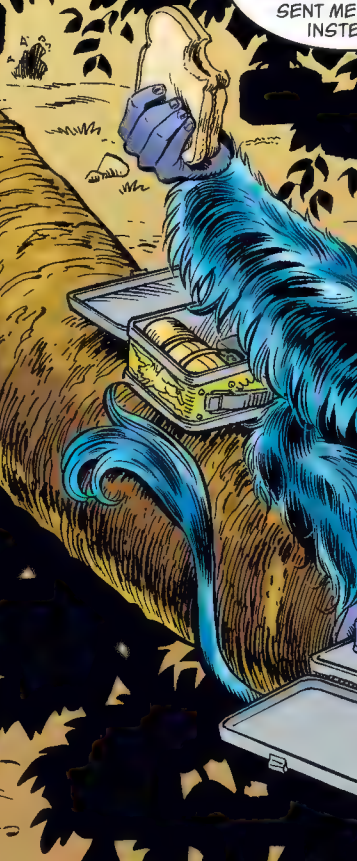
"SO WHAT IF BUFKIN THE BRAVE WASN'T ALWAYS SO QUICK ON THE UPTAKE? HE EVENTUALLY COMES AROUND, WHICH IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ANY HEROICALLY HEROIC HERO OF THE AGES."

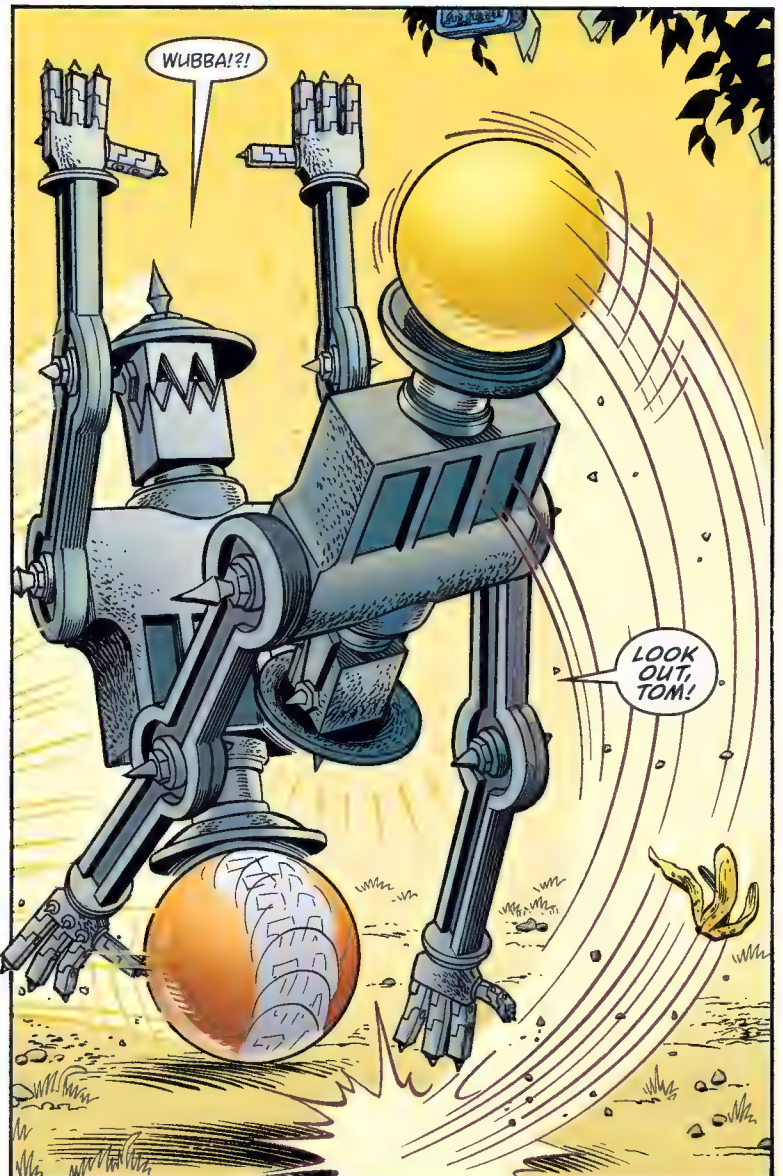
FEAR NOT, TOM!

THEY WON'T GET AWAY FROM ME!

FASTER! THEY'RE CLOSING ON US!

"AND LATER I LEARNED WE WEREN'T QUITE IN OZ--UNLESS HE MEANT IT GENERICALLY. CLOSE ENOUGH. WE WERE IN THE ALMOST NEXT DOOR LAND OF EV."



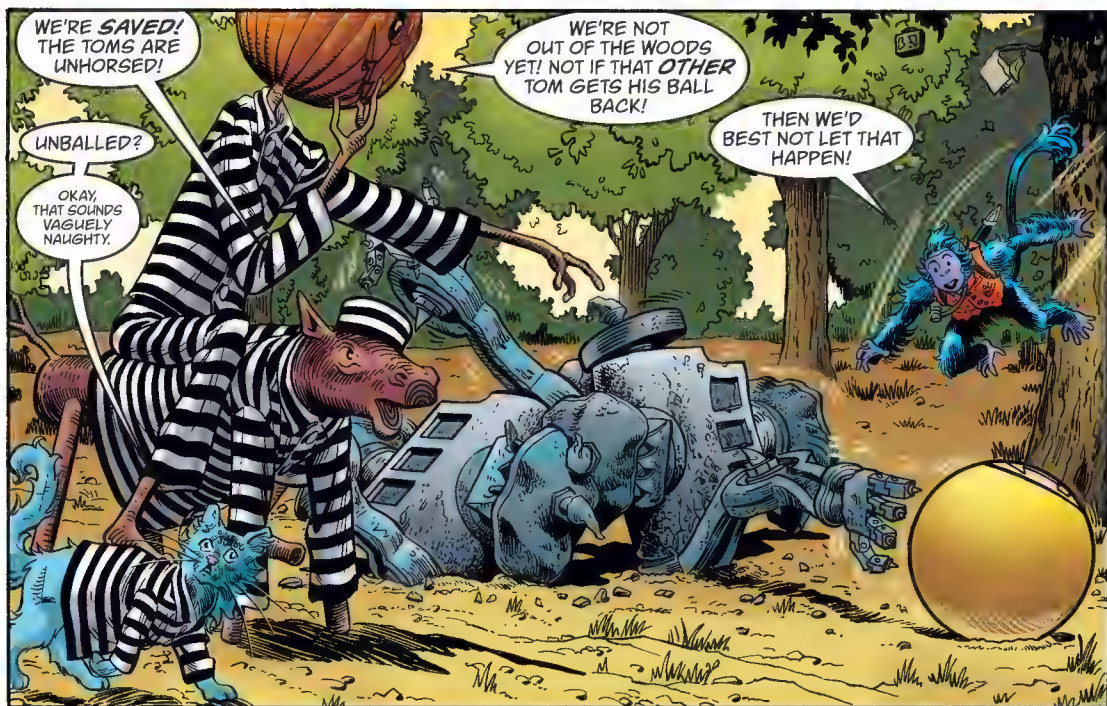
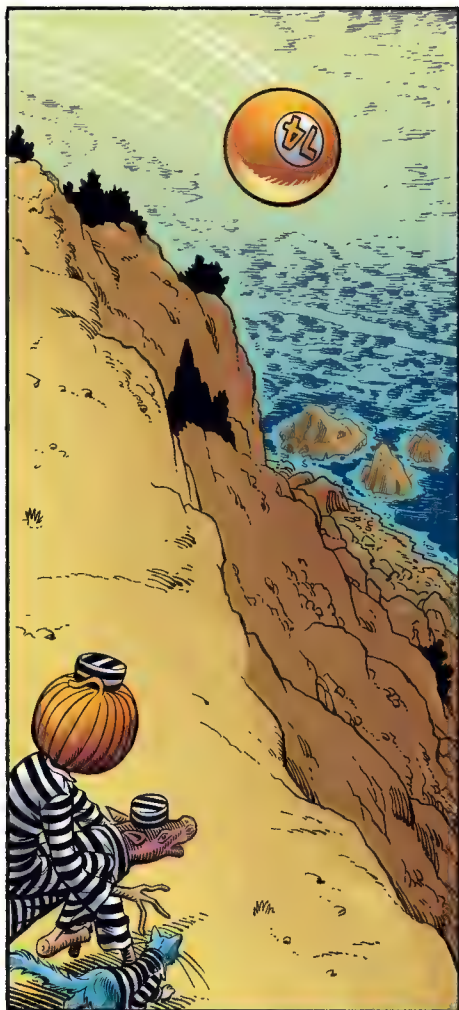


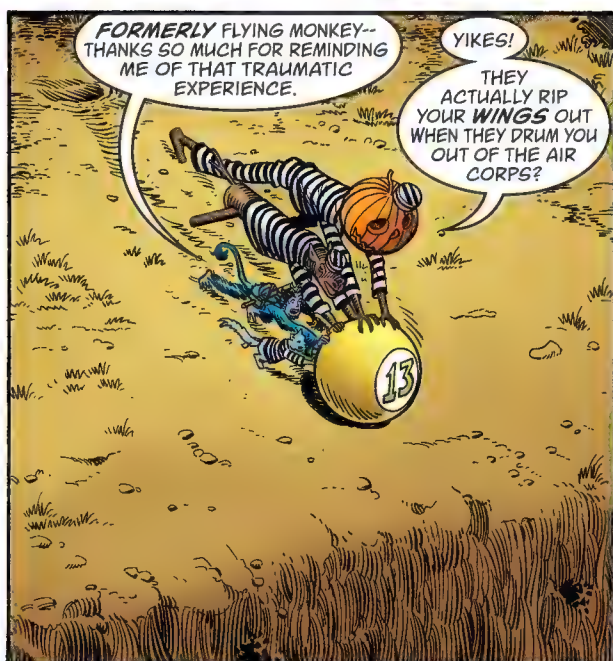


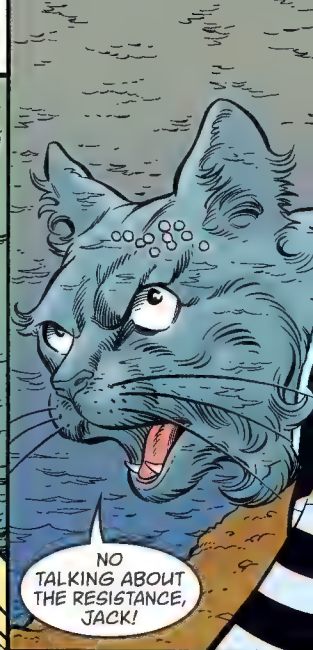
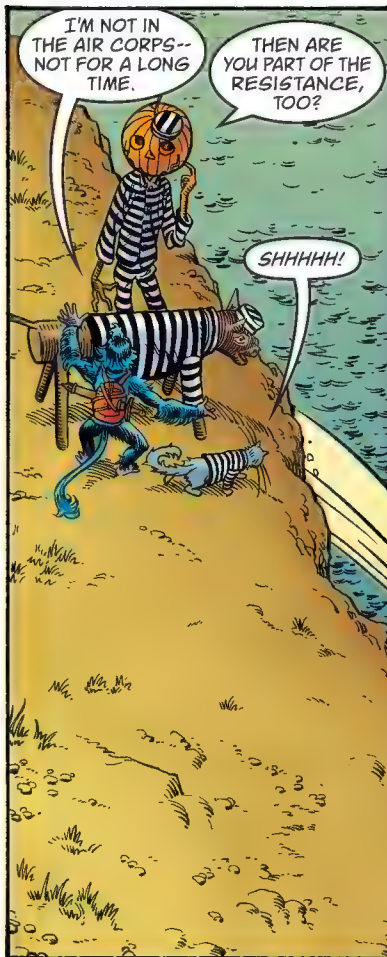
HOLY
BUCKETS!

LOOK
OUT!!

HEY!
WOULD'JA
LOOK AT
THAT!







"AWAY WE WENT, AND WHEN NIGHT FELL..."

WE WERE ON ONE OF THE NOME KING'S PRESS GANGS, BUILDING A ROAD ACROSS THE DEADLY DESERT..."



...LINKING OZ PROPER TO THE OTHER CONQUERED COUNTRIES.

THAT MAKES SENSE. ROME TAUGHT US THAT THE SECRET OF A STABLE EMPIRE IS A SYSTEM OF WELL-BUILT ROADS.

WHO'S ROME?



UHM-- DOESN'T MATTER.

WHEN WE SAW OUR CHANCE TO RUN, WE TOOK IT.

BUT THE RUMBLE TUMBLE TOMS WERE ON US RIGHT AWAY. WE'D HAVE BEEN RECAPTURED FOR SURE, HAD YOU TWO NOT COME ALONG.



WHAT'S YOUR PLAN NOW?

HARD TO SAY. TRUTH IS, WE REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT TO *SUCCEED* IN OUR ESCAPE.



LOOK FOR THE OTHERS WHO ARE FIGHTING BACK-- THAT'S WHAT I'M GOING TO DO.

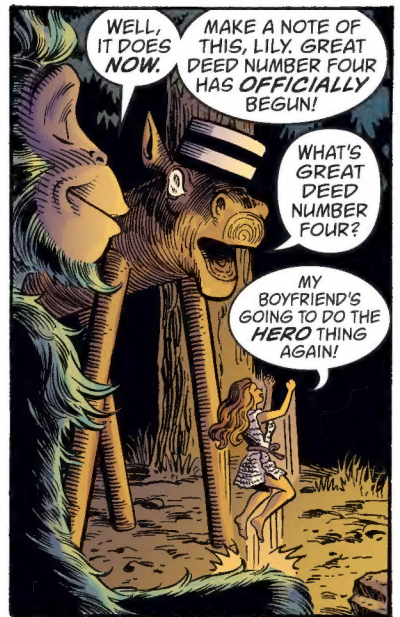




DOES THIS SECRET RESISTANCE OF YOURS HAVE A LEADER?

WHO KNOWS? WE'RE NOT EVEN SURE IT ACTUALLY EXISTS.

YIPPEE!



WELL, IT DOES NOW.

MAKE A NOTE OF THIS, LILY. GREAT DEED NUMBER FOUR HAS OFFICIALLY BEGUN!

WHAT'S GREAT DEED NUMBER FOUR?

MY BOYFRIEND'S GOING TO DO THE HERO THING AGAIN!



THAT'S WHEN BUFKIN THE BRAVE SETS OUT WITH HIS DOUGHTY LIEUTENANTS: LILY MARTAGON, BUNGLE, SAWHORSE, AND JACK MELONHEAD--

IT'S PUMPKINHEAD!

--WHATEVER--



--AND HE OVERTHROWS THE UP-START EMPEROR OF OZ, FREEING ITS PEOPLE FROM DIRE BONDAGE, AND PUTTING ALL OF THE MEANY TURD STINKYHEADS TO THE SWORD!



AND JUST WHEN DID HE DO ALL THIS?

STARTING RIGHT NOW, BOYS AND GIRLS! RIGHT NOW!

SO, WHO'S GOT ALL OF THE GOOD STUFF? THE GOLDEN CUP? THE WHATSIS BELT? THE POWDER OF LIFE? THE--

"AND THAT, DEAR READERS, IS HOW THE REVOLUTION STARTED."

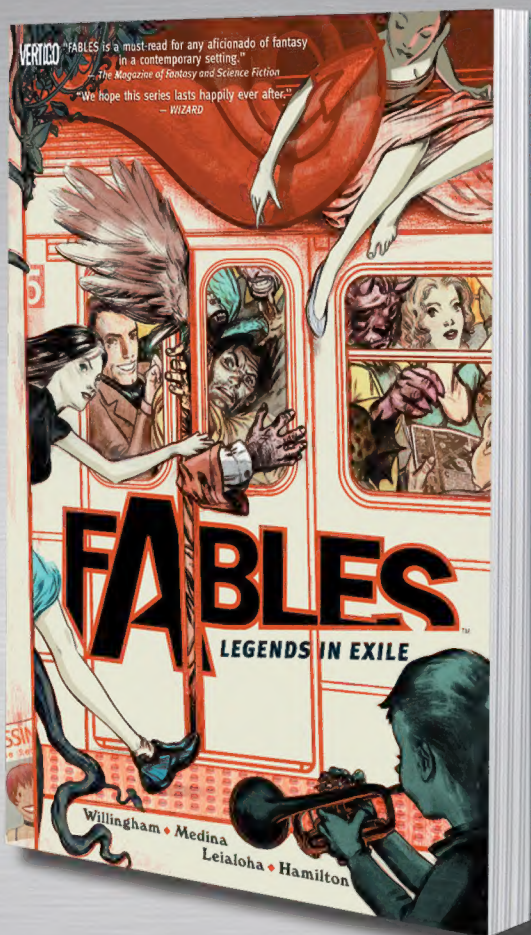
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BILL WILLINGHAM

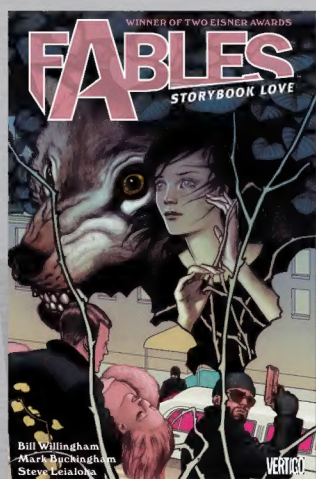
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
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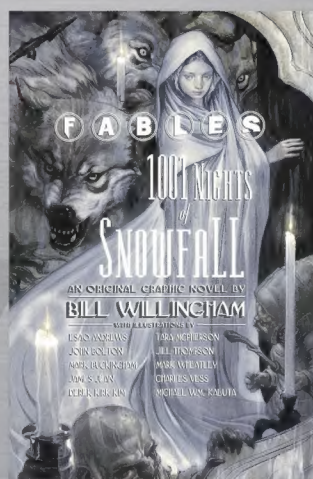
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NATHAN